

30th Anniversary Edition

**Alberta Council on Admissions
and Transfer**

Annual Report

**1 April 2004 –
31 March 2005**



Great planning leads to great futures – www.acat.gov.ab.ca

Vision Statement

To be recognized nationally and internationally as the premier post-secondary admissions and transfer system.

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Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer

Chair's Report

The Honourable David Hancock, Q.C.
Minister of Advanced Education
204 Legislature Building
Edmonton, Alberta
T5K 2B6

Dear Minister Hancock:

On behalf of the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer and in accordance with the Council's terms of reference, I have the honour of providing you with the Thirtieth Annual Report for the year ending 31 March 2005.

The commitment of Alberta's post-secondary education system to a smooth and effective transfer process is evident as we submit our 30th anniversary report. A cornerstone to this success is the Council's basic principle that a student should not be required to repeat previous learning experiences in which competence has been demonstrated. All of our efforts as a Council revolve around matters that will assist learners in their quest for lifelong learning. The results of our work showcase the post-secondary institutions' willingness to cooperate and collaborate for the benefit of the learner.

We are pleased with the progress ACAT has made in the past year. Thanks to our network of "Contact Persons" which includes a representative from each of 35 post-secondary institutions over 1,075 new transfer agreements have been captured in the *Alberta Transfer Guide* for a total of over 30, 200 agreements. Truly, Alberta is to be congratulated for its role as a leading system in Canada.

ACAT undertook two research projects in 2004-2005. The first examines how transfer agreements are negotiated in our Alberta post-secondary system, and compiles best practices in credit transfer. The handbook on credit transfer will not only ensure continuity of best practices among Alberta post-secondary institutions but will be available to other Canadian jurisdictions which are working towards setting up their own transfer systems, and this in turn will assist students who transfer across Canada to be able to receive support in similar manners consistent with Alberta's standards and principles.

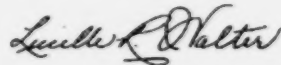
The second research project investigated the state of prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) in Alberta post-secondary institutions, specifically with regard to learning acquired in a manner outside of the norm, i.e., through such mechanisms as experiential learning, self-study, or work-based courses. Again, the deliverable is a handbook that will assist those institutions which do not yet have such processes in place.



Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer

On behalf of ACAT, I would like to acknowledge the contribution of the post-secondary institutions that are part of Alberta's transfer system. I would also like to thank the Ministry for the support provided by the Secretariat and the department. I look forward to working with the Council and its member institutions to contribute to the province's vision of accessible, affordable and quality learning opportunities for all Albertans.

Sincerely,



Lucille R. Walter, BEd, DipEd
Chair



Mandate

The Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer (ACAT) serves as an independent body through which stakeholders work co-operatively for the benefit of learners to ensure smooth secondary to post-secondary transition and effective transferability of courses or programs for students.

ACAT provides leadership to Alberta's post-secondary transfer to achieve:

- Increased educational opportunities for adult learners through student transfer; and
- Accurate information for learners about admissions and transfer opportunities

Mission

The mission of the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer (ACAT) is to be a catalyst for necessary change and an advocate for learners in the areas of admission and transfer to educational programs.

ACAT provides leadership and direction in the improvement and enlargement of educational opportunities for Alberta learners through inter-institutional transfer. This requires a commitment to improving communication among and between Alberta's post-secondary institutions, as well as stakeholders in the trades and secondary system and to promoting the advantages of a system of education, including the importance of educational planning by learners.

To carry out its mission, ACAT:

- Identifies issues and explores resolutions to these issues with stakeholders;
- Advocates for learners at both a general level through its Principles and specific level through interaction of ACAT's staff with learners;
- Communicates with stakeholders and encourages communications among stakeholders on matters regarding admissions and transfer; and
- Provides a forum for discussion of issues arising out of environmental change and trends related to post-secondary education.

ACAT is a leader in ensuring that learners have access to a highly effective and efficient transfer system. ACAT inspires partner institutions to guarantee that prior learning of prospective students is appropriately recognized upon admission.



Highlights from Strategic Priorities

ACAT identified five key strategic priorities to respond to the significant opportunities and challenges influencing its ability to achieve its goals and strategies for 2004-07. Through its review of internal and external challenges, the strategic priorities described below were identified and worked on concurrently. These priorities are in addition to the important ongoing core businesses of ACAT.

Learner Transitions

ACAT continued to provide leadership to ensure that secondary to post-secondary admission issues were addressed. Further work was done to ensure clarity of information for high school students to help them select appropriate courses to meet entrance requirements of post-secondary programs through enhancements to the *Transfer Guide* and information provided in Learning Clicks presentations.

Pan-Canadian and International Leadership

As a leader in admissions and transfer, ACAT continued to assist other jurisdictions in Canada understand the transfer system by participating on the Council of Ministers of Education Canada working group on transfer. ACAT also assisted with the production of an articulation guide for the Canadian Alliance of Education and Training Organizations (CAETO).

ACAT's Profile

The profile of ACAT was raised through enhanced communications, increased public profile and improved communication tools.

Recognition of Prior Learning

ACAT has adopted principles and standards for the recognition of prior learning and post-secondary institutions have developed appropriate policies. A research project was established to further enhance knowledge of prior learning practices in the system.

Research

Research began on best practices in the transfer handbook.



Goals and Accomplishments

ACAT has identified four goals with specific outcomes that describe the end results it wants to achieve in fulfilling its mission.

Core Business One: Admission practices and policies at post-secondary institutions are clearly articulated
ADMISSION

GOAL 1 Facilitate the development and maintenance of fair and equitable admission practices and policies at post-secondary institutions.

- Outcomes**
- 1.1** Students make smooth transitions from secondary to post-secondary and post-secondary to post-secondary studies.
 - 1.2** Students have improved opportunities to apply for admission.

Accomplishments

Transitions:

- The articulation committee in Social Studies continued its work.
- The Science articulation committee completed its consultation and a report with recommendations was circulated to all post-secondary institutions.

Academic Upgrading:

- ACAT continued to consult with the Provincial Academic Upgrading Coordinators (PAUC) to explore expansion of academic upgrading courses for admission to post-secondary programs
- Charts illustrating academic upgrading courses accepted for admission to college, technical institute, university or private university college programs in lieu of those offered in regular high school programs were published.

System Wide Admissions Information:

- A working group was struck to look at how universities might present a more consistent or common format for admission requirements. Further work will be done in 2005-06.

Application Systems:

- Indicated to the Minister that ACAT will work with the post-secondary institutions in the establishment of a common application system as described in the *Access to the Future Act*.



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Core Business Two: Facilitate agreements among post-secondary institutions to acknowledge and recognize appropriate previous learning experience.
TRANSFER

GOAL 2 Learners receive appropriate educational credit when they transfer from one Alberta program to another.

Outcomes 2.1 An effective and efficient student transfer system.
2.2 Prior learning assessments are given system-wide recognition.

Accomplishments

Enhancing the Transfer System

- A "Best Practices" subcommittee was established and a document developed on best practices in transfer.
- Institutions reviewed internal transfer approval processes based on best practices.
- 1075 new by-course and by-program (or block) transfer agreements were established across the system and captured in the guide and on the web site.
- Published the *Alberta Transfer Guide* and updated the *Online Alberta Transfer Guide* weekly.

Monitoring Effectiveness of Transfer

- Produced the annual Transfer Patterns Study.
- Completed research on transfer student profiles to support the CMEC initiative on Credit Transfer.
- Continued to participate in the Campus Alberta Quality Council to ensure their work supports the transfer system.
- Established linkages with eCampus Alberta to enhance availability of transfer information.
- Completed the transfer-specific component of the graduate student satisfaction survey. Results indicated a high level of satisfaction.

Ensuring Accuracy of Transfer Information

- Continued to enhance collaboration with institutional Contact Persons to review all transfer agreements before production of the *Alberta Transfer Guide*.

Supporting the Enhancement of Prior Learning

- Collaborated with partners to enhance processes for prior learning assessment and recognition, including membership on the external advisory committee to Athabasca University's Pan-Canadian Gateways project on PLAR.
- ACAT's PLAR Advisory Committee commenced development of a handbook of the best practices in PLAR in Alberta.



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Core Business Three: Ensure that learners and other stakeholders have timely and accurate information about admissions requirements, course and program transfer opportunities and transfer policies, and provide a forum for inter-institutional discussion of admissions and transfer issues.

COMMUNICATION

GOAL 3 Learners have access to current, accurate information on admissions and transfer policies as well as course and program transfer opportunities.

- Outcomes**
- 3.1** Information to assist high school and potential transfer students is available.
 - 3.2** Alberta post-secondary institutions have a forum for inter-institutional discussion of admissions and transfer issues.

Accomplishments

Enhance Information Available to Students

- Continued to work with institutional partners to produce an annual compilation of all transfer agreements contained within *Alberta Transfer Guide* and the *Online Alberta Transfer Guide*.
- Increased the number of stakeholders linked to ACAT and to the *Online Alberta Transfer Guide*.
- Promoted the Alberta Learning Information Service (ALIS) through the Guide and Learning Clicks.
- The ACAT public web site received nearly 4 million hits.
- Continued to provide the Transfer Infoline service by responding to over 275 e-mail and telephone inquiries.
- Continued implementation of the ACAT Communication Plan by making 6 presentations to students, high school counselors, career advisors and other stakeholders.

Transitions:

- Continued to produce advising charts to support admission of high school students from other provinces applying to Alberta post-secondary institutions.
- Began exploring the feasibility of providing information on transfer agreements between Alberta institutions and institutions in other jurisdictions. Work will continue in this area.

Inter-Institutional Discussions:

- Ensured there was an opportunity for a round table discussion at every ACAT meeting.
- Ensured the host institution at ACAT meetings has an opportunity to make a presentation on their institution.
- Maintained the Contact Persons listserve as a communication medium.
- Held annual Contact Persons meeting. Participants expressed satisfaction with the meeting.



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Core Business Four:

EDUCATION & ADVOCACY

Inform Albertans about the benefits of our admissions and transfer system, and assist and advise other jurisdictions about the procedures for and benefits of establishing and maintaining an efficient and effective admissions and transfer system.

GOAL 4

Albertans are informed about the benefits of our admissions and transfer system and ACAT serves as a model for other jurisdictions.

- Outcomes**
- 4.1 Albertans are aware of the benefits of our admissions and transfer system.
 - 4.2 Provide advice and assistance to promote inter-provincial portability of courses and programs.

Accomplishments

Enhance Understanding of the Benefits of Transfer

- Presentations were made at conferences, workshops, career fairs and within Alberta Advanced Education to raise general awareness of ACAT.
- The Chair met with the executive of ACTISEC.

Increase use of transfer guides in other provinces

- Participated in national meetings on credit transfer and PLAR.
- Preliminary work on the possibility of establishing a Canadian association on credit transfer has begun.
- Received anecdotal evidence that ACAT is perceived as a national leader in the establishment of admissions and transfer systems.



